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EDINNE RTHAT WAS ALWAYS THERE



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By ROY JUDSON SNELL
ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH K SMITH



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The Dinner That Was Always There



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The Vegetable and Fruit Children
The Dinner That Was Always
There
Six Tiddly Winks and Their A to
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ALBERT WHITMAN & COMPANY
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Menadlook and Attakak Had One Another for Playmates

THE · DINNER · THAT · WAS · AL- WAYS · THERE ·

by

Roy Judson Snell

Author of

Little Boy France,
Eskimo Robinson Crusoe,
Skimmer the Dauntless in
the far North, Little White Fox.

Illustrated by
Sarah K. Smith



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Spring Is Coming

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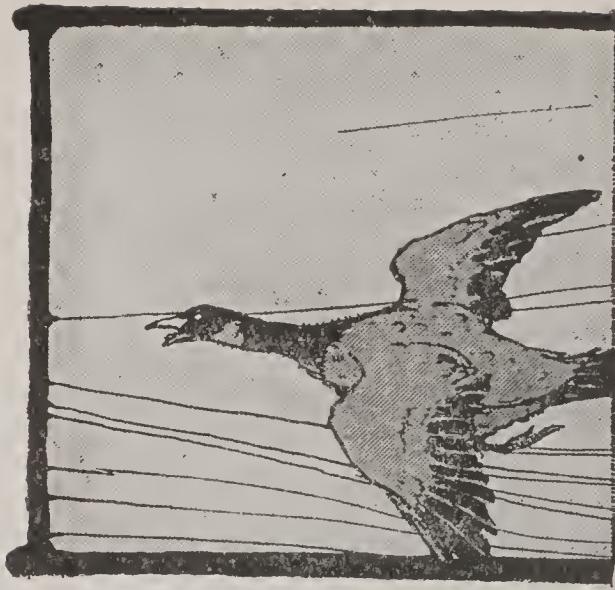
PREFACE

IF you were a boy and woke up many mornings hungry and there was no food to eat, what would you do? And if you heard your little girl friend crying for food and knew that she had none, what would you do?

You would go out in search of the *Dinner That Was Always There*, wouldn't you? And when you found it, you would bring it back so that all your people could share it.

That is just exactly what the little Eskimo hero of this book did. His adventure on that long search, his encounter with the three bears and the white wolves, his courage in the dark cave, his meeting with the very strange old man with the white face and long beard, and finally the very surprising way that the *Dinner That Was Always There* came to him, make a story that will hold any boy's or girl's attention to the very end.

Roy J. Snell.



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See here I have a story.

“Uba-gook! Can-ook?” That’s the Way Kitmesuk Always Starts His Stories

The Dinner That Was Always There



Menadlook

CHAPTER I MENADLOOK AND ATTAKAK AT HOME

When the ice has swept down from the North and the ocean keeps still, still; when the sun has gone out of sight and out of sight and out of sight till you can't see him at all, all day

and all night; when the moon smiles and smiles and all the little stars twinkle and twinkle till one is certain they are going to twinkle themselves quite out of the sky; when Great White Bear comes prowling around and looks down through the eider duck-skin window-shade. When Little White Fox goes creeping, creeping everywhere looking for Big White Bear's kitchen. When the wind makes the covering to the window rattle and pop, pop. When the dogs sing "Roo! Roo! Roo!" all lonesome like, then all the little Eskimo boys with their shiny brown bare arms and all the little Eskimo girls, with their shiny brown bare arms huddle about the seal-oil lamp in the cozy, Oh! so cozy, "igloo," which is the

name the Eskimos call their houses built of ice blocks, and old Kitmesuk, with his shaggy brown beard hanging down and his shaggy brown eyelashes hanging down and his long brown hair hanging down, sits on the bed-shelf and tells a perfectly good story of other times and other places and the years of long ago.

And the one the children love best is a very long story, the one I am going to tell you now. It is all about how the Eskimo boy, Menadlook, went in search of *The Dinner That Was Always There*.

“Uba-gook! Can-ook?” That’s the way Kitmesuk always starts his stories, while he strokes his long shaggy moustache, boogs his eyes out

from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, and tosses back his long brown hair. And so far as I can tell, what he means is this, "See here I have a story! Perhaps you won't like it, but here it is." Now you may be sure the little Eskimo boys and the little Eskimo girls always like the story, for Kitmesuk is a wonderful story-teller, though like all good story-tellers, he is very modest and only dares hope that his stories may be pleasing to the little folks of the tundra which is what the Eskimos call their frozen country.

"Uba-gook. Can-ook?"

In the village of Kinegan, on Cape Prince of Wales, on Behring Straits, in Alaska, there lived a boy and girl with an old Eskimo man and his wife.



Attakak

The boy, Menadlook, was not the old man's son, but his nephew. The girl, Attakak, was no relation to them at all, but they had taken her to keep, for they had said, "When there is plenty for all to eat we shall not miss her share, and if there is nothing for any of us to eat, why it won't matter either," which is good sense for simple Eskimo people, I am sure.

Well, sometimes there were plenty of walrus dinners on the meat shelf, and then the old woman would bring down plenty of dinner for all and cook it over the fire. Then she would say, "Come now, the walrus dinner is here," and all would eat as much as they liked. But by and by the day would come when she would climb to the high meat shelf and scrape and scrape, and say, "There were plenty of walrus dinners on this shelf last week, but now there is no dinner here." Then the little girl, Attakak, would laugh and the boy, Menadlook, would laugh, and they would run and play and forget all about there not being any dinner on the meat shelf.

The next day the old woman would climb to the meat shelf and rattle and scrape as before, and say again, "Well, there were plenty of dinners on this shelf last week, but there is no walrus dinner on this shelf now." Then the little girl would smile ever so little and the boy would smile ever so little. They would run and try to play, but they couldn't very well, for they were thinking all the time of the dinner that wasn't there.

The third day the old woman would do as she had done the two days before, but the little girl and the boy did not smile at all, for they were very, very hungry, and two little streams of tears crept down the cheeks of the little girl, though she tried bravely to keep

them back. But the boy would tell her not to cry and would try to comfort her; "For," he would say, "when I am older I shall go in search of *The Dinner That Is Always There.*"

And with the family it was always the same. There were times when there were seal-meat dinners on the meat shelf. Then the old woman would cook a good lot of seal-meat and say, "Come, here are dinners for all." But all too soon she would be rattling her stick on the empty meat shelf, and saying, "Well, there were plenty of dinners here last week, but now there is no dinner at all." And always the children ran away and played until they were very, very hungry. Then the little girl would sit and weep, and the boy



When I Am Older I Shall Go and Search

would try to comfort her by telling her of *The Dinner That Was Always There*. Always and always it was the same. There were walrus dinners in spring and seal dinners in summer, duck dinners in autumn, and fish and white bear dinners in winter, but always there were plenty for a time, then there were none, and the old woman rattled her stick on the empty shelf and said the same thing over and over, "There were plenty of dinners here last week, now there is no dinner at all," and the boy would comfort the little girl by talking of the dinner he was going to find, *The Dinner That Is Always There*.



Old Father Raven

On the Great Rock

CHAPTER II

MENADLOOK AND RAVEN FATHER

One time when spring was near again and there were no fish in the sea, no birds on the tundra, no walrus in the straits, no white bear on the ice, it was

starving time again. Every day Menadlook crept up to the window of the igloo and looked down at Attakak's pinched little face, and wished he had something to give her to eat.

Finally he could stand it no longer, and though he was very weak from hunger, and though all the hunters were saving their strength till they were sure of game, Menadlook took his bola balls and his bola cord and went away up the beach to see if he might not find one wild duck that had ventured to the Arctic land very early this spring.

In those olden days, before the Eskimo people had the white man's noisy guns, they had bola balls. These were two small ivory balls, very heavy and



Sarah S. Smith

In the Shelter of a Great Rock

hard, fastened to two short strings. These short strings were fastened to one long string of seal-skin. The hunter whirled this long string with the bola balls on the two short strings over his head till the string went “Ziz, ziz, ziz.” Then he threw it, and the strings would wind round and round whatever it struck and stay there.

Well, Menadlook went down on the beach, then over by the edge of the tundra and along the foot of the mountain, but not a thing did he see. He went over to the little lakes where the wild ducks stayed, but the little lakes were all frozen over and no ducks could swim there. All the time he was growing weaker and weaker with hunger, so he crept up to the shelter of a great

rock and sat down to rest. He sat there a long time and at last, seeming to feel stronger, he was about to go further around the mountain in hopes of finding a white rabbit or even a white owl asleep somewhere, though a white owl would be very poor eating, I am sure. He had risen to go when he heard a hoarse "Harook, Harook!" right over his head. He looked, and there above him on the great rock was a large black raven, black as black could be! He had one wing spread out at the side like an old woman who had been gathering sticks, and his bill was as shiny and black as the most precious of old ivory. Menadlook thought he had never seen such a large and wonderful raven in all his life.

Well, I think a raven is almost worse eating than an owl, because his meat is black, but Menadlook was not choosing just then, so he took his bola balls out of his pocket and unwound the strings very carefully. Then he threw the balls a little way from him so he could get a good swing on them. Then he began to wind the balls over his head. “Ziz! Ziz! Ziz!” faster and faster they flew, “Zing! Zing! Zing!” they sang. In just another second they would have gone singing through the air right at the neck of the great raven, for you must know that there was no better shot in the village with the bola balls than Menadlook.

But just as he was about to let the bola balls fly, he began to think how

much this raven looked like the Raven Father the old men talked about in the igloos when the nights were long and dark. Raven Father had made all the folks in the world, so the old men said, and they must have known, for they were very wise. Well, Menadlook began thinking of this, and of how terrible a thing it would be if he were to kill Raven Father and make raven stew of him. A very bad stew that would be! He thought about it so long that the bola string wound about his own neck and bumped him on the nose. At this the great raven gave a chuckling sound way down in his throat, which sounded like a boat being drawn up on the gravel beach, and spreading his wings flew high, high

in the air, only to come tumbling down as if he had been shot by a hunter. Down, down he tumbled, faster and faster, until he was looping the loop three or four times every second. Down, down! Menadlook thought he would surely be dashed upon a rock and killed! Down, down! and every time he went over he made a strange sound, which sounded like nothing so much as the pulling of a cork from an old skin-bag filled with seal-oil. Down! Down he tumbled till he was almost to the ground, then Ah-ne-ca! he spread his great wings and went floating away like some wonderful aviator in an air-ship, although Menadlook, of course, knew nothing at all of air-ships or aviators, being only an Eskimo boy.

THE DINNER THAT WAS ALWAYS THERE

The raven floated on and on, on and on, till he was quite out of sight. Then Menadlook began to think he was not Raven Father at all, but just some wise old raven who was sitting on that rock looking for something.

“I wonder what he could have been looking for?” said Menadlook, scratching his head. “Anyway, I’m going to look about and see.” He went walking about the great rock looking carefully here, there, and everywhere, and Ah-ne-ca! There it was! A rabbit hole under the rock! And yes, indeed, the rabbit was right there!

Well, that raven, whether he was Father Raven or not, did not have rabbit soup for dinner that night, for Attakak had it instead, and I am sure

she shared it with her gallant little playmate, even though he wished her to eat it all.

The walrus came next day, and after that there were walrus dinners for all again, and for a long time the old woman went every day to the meat shelf, brought down meat and said, "Come, now we will have dinner. Here are dinners for all."

But Menadlook did not forget that he was going in search of *The Dinner That Is Always There*, and he became more and more sure that as soon as the snow was thick and hard on the tundra, and the ice thick and hard on the little lakes, and the ocean silenced by the great ice-cakes, that very year he would go in search of this wonderful



Raven Floated On and On

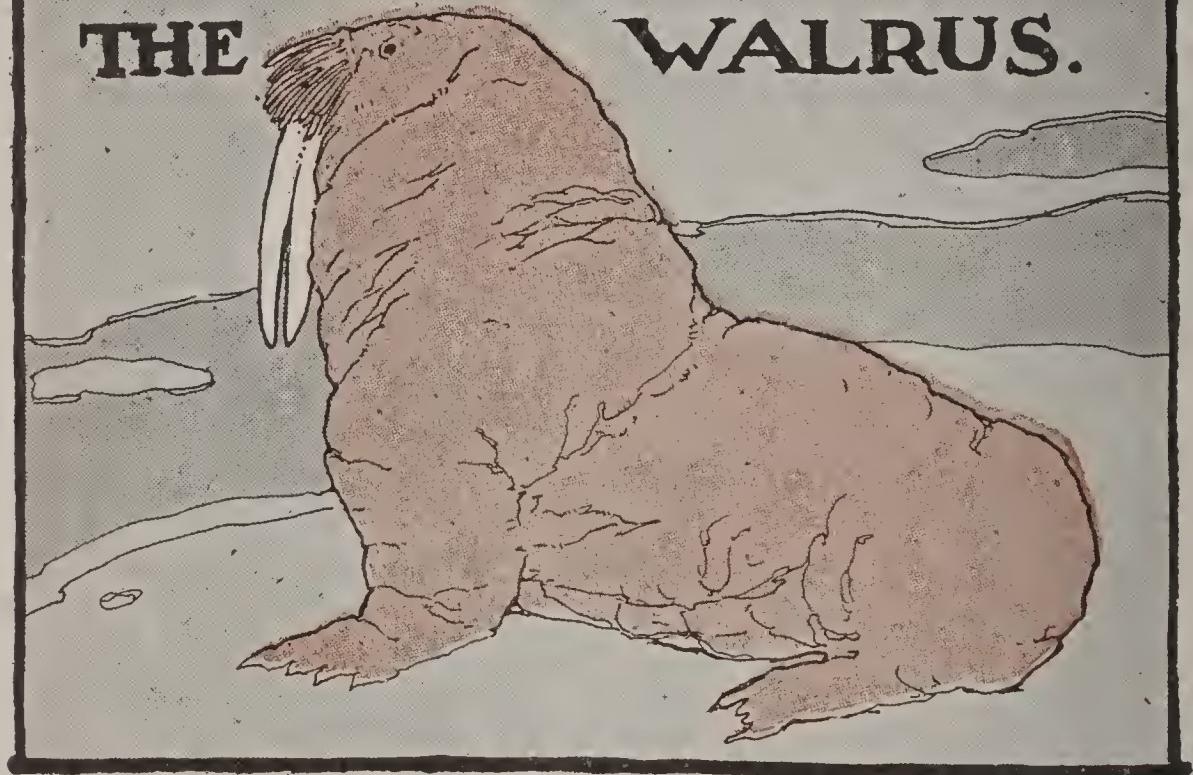
dinner, for had he not seen a great raven that looked very much like Raven Father? And did not this mean good luck? Did it not mean that Raven Father would watch over him on his journey? Well, anyway, that is what Menadlook thought it meant, and when we feel that someone is looking over us and protecting us it makes us very brave. So all summer long, Menadlook longed for the snow and ice and winter-time when he might be on his way.

CHATER III

THE TWO WHITE BEARS

Now where in all the great lonesome land of Alaska was Menadlook to find *The Dinner That Was Always There?* It was winter and he was ready, but which way should he go? It might be out on the dark old ocean, which was filled with great white cakes of ice; it might be somewhere on the broad sandy beach all covered with hard, packed snow stretching away and away to the northward; it might be on the broad salt marshes which ran along the beach and were filled with such wonderful little salt lakes in the bright summer-time, but which were white and cheerless now; and it

THE WALRUS.



might be way, way yonder in the mountains which seemed to be smoking at present.

Menadlook considered this for a long time, then at last, shouldering his pook-sack, into which Attakak had placed a very fine lunch, and in which also were his bola balls and his cord, he patted Attakak on the foot as a special sign of affection, and told her not to worry, for he would soon be back with the wonderful dinner which he was about to seek. He had decided to travel along the beach for a time, and trust to some sign which might tell him which way to go.

He had tramped all day till his feet were tired and his stomach empty, when he came to two old tumbled-

down igloos on the edge of the tundra. Nobody lived there, so he cleaned the snow from one of them, and took some half-rotted logs from the other for building a fire. He boiled a cup of Russian tea, which had been brought across the Straits by some native traders. After this, he felt very cozy in his old house with his faithful dog, Soo-look, by his side.

As he sat in the broken-down entrance to the old igloo, after he had eaten his lunch, when the sun had set and the stars were coming out one by one, he saw two very white mounds of snow before him on the beach. These he knew were sand-dunes covered with snow. He looked at them a long time

and thought how one might dig in some of these mounds and discover a rich cave of hidden treasure.

At last he went to put more wood on his fire. Returning after a time he looked away at the sand-piles. Then he rubbed his eyes and looked again. Was he dreaming? Had the cold air made him sleepy? Was he sleeping now? He pinched himself. No, he was awake. But sure as he was alive, there were four sand - piles covered with snow where before there were but two! And when he looked closely he knew that two of the sand-piles were not so white as the others. They looked as if some loose yellow sand had been blown over them.

He looked and looked, and in time by straining his eyes he was able to see two round balls at the top of each of the two brown piles, and two red spots lower down. Then he guessed right away what these were. They were not sand-piles covered with snow at all, but two great, big white bears!

Was he frightened? Well, that would be hard to tell. He was so interested in his search for *The Dinner That Was Always There* that if he were frightened at all, it didn't last long, and he was wondering at once whether these two great silent fellows who had their white palaces on the floating ice of the ocean, and had come south and south and south hundreds and hundreds of miles had anything

to tell him about *The Dinner That Was Always There*. It might be—it just might be true—that, as the medicine men sometimes said, the big white bears had a great, great meat shelf far, far to the north, and that it was broad as the earth and high as the moon. Supposing they did? And supposing they could tell him where it was? Wouldn't that be grand?

“But then,” he thought to himself, “these fellows can’t talk to me, and if they could, perhaps they wouldn’t tell. The only way they could help me would be to show me the way, and on the way there they might become very, very hungry. Then what would become of Soolook and me, and of my people who might starve if I do not

bring them back *The Dinner That Is Always There?*" When he thought of this, he drew back into the entrance of his borrowed home and kept very quiet indeed. And old Soolook was very quiet too, for it might be that these two white bears were hungry, very hungry, just now, and if they found out that there was a little boy and an old dog over in that deserted igloo they might come over there to see about it, and then surely there would be no more Menadlook, no more Soolook, and no *Dinner That Was Always There.*

But by and by Menadlook looked and there were only the two very white snow piles standing by the sea. The



Sarah K Smith.

They Ate the Remainder

white bears had gone back to their ice train and were journeying southward once more.

Menadlook was soon sleeping soundly beside Soolook and did not waken until the sun came peeping in between the cracks of the wall. They ate the remainder of Attakak's lunch for breakfast, then struck out across the tundra toward the smoking mountains where no Eskimo had ever been.

"For," said Menadlook to himself, "If I am to find *The Dinner That Is Always There*, I must go where no one has ever been before. If it were where others could see it, it would have been found long ago."

CHAPTER IV

THE THREE WHITE WOLVES

All day Menadlook and Soolook tramped across the tundra, which grew lonelier and lonelier as they journeyed on. That night, they had nothing to eat and went without their supper. Because there was no deserted igloo on the tundra, and not so much as a willow bush to shelter them from the wind, which came sweeping down from the north, very cold indeed, Menadlook was obliged to build a snow house. This took a long time, and he was very tired when he had it finished. It was a very good snow house, with a small, round door and two windows which had snow cakes for lights. He

was rather proud of it. Soolook had already crept inside, and was probably fast asleep, and Menadlook was about to creep in too, when he saw something very strange standing out on the tundra. There were three somethings out there. They looked like posts of driftwood stuck in the ground and all covered with snow, white as white could be, and very still.

Well, Menadlook was very much surprised at this, for he had not noticed them there when he had begun building the snow house. "But then," he thought to himself, "probably they were there, and I was so much interested in the house that I didn't notice them. Anyway, I'm too tired to go

and see what they are now. I'll go over there in the morning." He started once more to creep into the house.

But while he had been thinking, darkness had begun to spread itself across the white tundra and things were changing. As he looked once more at the strange white posts, he thought he caught a red gleam from the tops of them. He looked and looked, and was at last sure that he saw two gleaming red balls at the top of each of the white posts. They gleamed and gleamed like great red beads.

Then he knew at once what these strange white things were! They were not posts of driftwood nor piles of snow. No, indeed! They were three white, white wolves that had come

down to the tundra from the Smoking Mountain! The red spots were their eyes gleaming in the dark, and though they did not move at all, Menadlook knew they were looking at him.

Well, here were some new strangers! These white wolves never came to the beach to visit his people. Their home was far, far away where the Eskimo people had never been. Should he make friends with them and ask them to lead him to *The Dinner That Was Always There*, which might be hidden away over among the Smoking Mountains? He might do this, but then all of the wolf folk had sharp, sharp teeth and when they are hungry, like the great white bears, they are not a

bit particular what they eat, and consider an Eskimo boy an unusually good dinner. The more he looked at

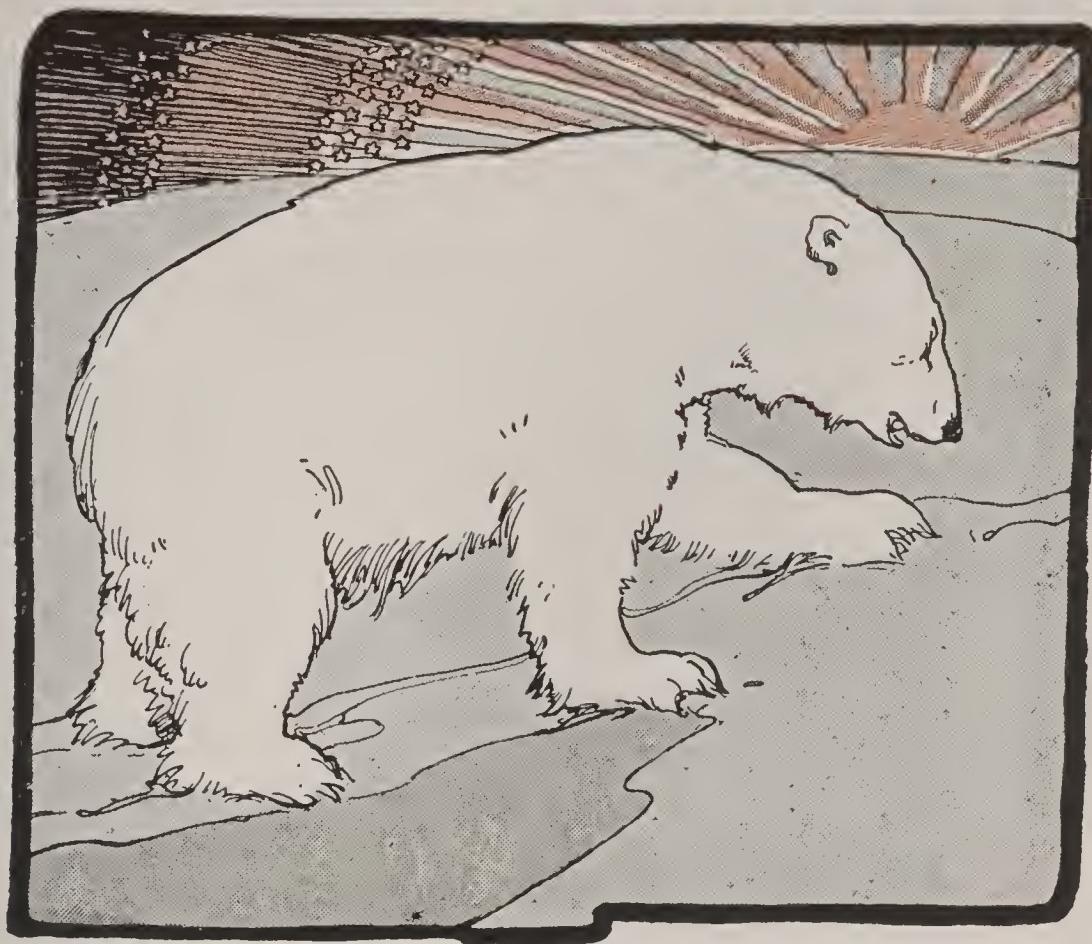


He Caught the Gleam of Their Eyes

them, and the more he caught the bright gleam of their eyes, the more sure he became that they were no friends of his, and were better left alone. He cut a hard cake of ice, just the size of the door to his snow house, and crawling inside, pulled the snow-door in after him.

Whether the white wolves came and knocked at that door during the night he never knew, for he was soon fast asleep and dreaming of *The Dinner That Is Always There*.

The next day he came upon a great herd of caribou whose hoofs crack-cracked against one another as they traveled southward. They looked very kind, and Menadlook knew that they ate only reindeer moss and willow leaves, but they were very swift fellows, so, though they were going far, far south where there were many wonderful things, and where, indeed, there might be *The Dinner That Was Always There*. Menadlook knew immediately that he could never follow them, and as for catching a ride on the back



A Prowling Great White Bear

of one of them, it was quite out of the question, for they had no more than got a whiff at the smell of old Soolook than they went bounding away, their hoofs cracking together louder than ever.



CHAPTER V

WHISTLING CAVE AT THE FOOT OF SMOKING MOUNTAIN

Though old Soolook ran this way and that all day long, he failed to catch a white rabbit for their dinner. Menadlook was shuddering at the thought of another night spent on the

cold tundra, when he heard a low whistling, much like the wind about his snow house, only steadier. He went in the direction of the sound toward the foot of Smoking Mountain, and every moment it grew louder and louder. Now it sounded like the whistle of a boy who had but recently learned to whistle. Whoo-de-le whoot! Whoo-le-de-loot! it sounded out of the half darkness that was all about the boy and his dog. Menadlook thought this must be the Whistling Cave. He had heard old men tell of it. Following the sound which grew louder and shriller every moment, he came at last to the mouth of the Whistling Cave

indeed! As he was about to step inside he tripped and fell over something very firmly frozen in the earth. Picking himself up he looked closely at the object. It was a great tusk, such a tusk as no walrus in the world could carry about. He peered all about, and by the light of the moon could see great bones lying on the earth, most of them half buried in the ground, and beside this one tusk there were five others. "These," he thought to himself, "must be the bones of the great animals that used to live in the cave."

You might be interested to know that if you were to travel in Alaska today and were to look in right places, you would find some of these bones and tusks lying about on the ground

still, and all this goes to prove that this story is quite true. The white man calls them the bones and tusks of mastodons.

Menadlook finally crept into the cave a short distance. Then, since it was yet very early in the day, because the sun had set at two o'clock, as is its custom still in some parts of Alaska on certain days in the winter time, he made a torch of moss and walked far back into the cave. It was very difficult indeed to keep his torch lit. The wind which caused the whistling at the mouth of the cave seemed to come from very far inside, and kept sweeping down through the dark cavern. He went on and on—back, back into the cave, keeping watch all the time

very sharply, and listening ever now and then, but hearing only the “Whoo—Whoo” of the wind. At last, after he had gone back in the cave a long way, he came to a place where the cave divided away in two directions. From one of these forks all the wind seemed to be coming, while from the other came none at all. The torch burned straight up toward the lofty ceiling when Menadlook stepped inside it. In journeying on Menadlook chose this fork. “For,” he said to himself, “it will soon be time to sleep, and it will be warmer here.”

He had gone only a few rods farther when he tumbled over a great tusk again, and found himself among some more giant bones. These were much



He Made a Torch of Moss

fresher than those outside, and the tusks were nearly as white as the tusk of a walrus. He looked closely, and to his horror found the prints of giant toes in the soft rock of the floor. But then, it might well be that these tracks were made by the very monster whose bones lay here before him, for in such a quiet place nothing would disturb them for thousands of years. He decided to sleep here this night with one of the great bones for his pillow.

It was not so cold in the cave as it had been in the deserted igloo, or in the snow house, so before he went to sleep Menadlook lay and dreamed of *The Dinner That Was Always There* and of the places where he might find it. "I might find it," he thought to

himself, “I might find it far, far south, where the walrus goes in the winter, for there men say, are islands and islands, and on each island there are hundreds and hundreds of strange seal folk that stand up on their flippers almost like men, and have coats as thick as Tdariuk, the reindeer, and as soft as Master Brown Mink. They must be very good to eat, I am sure, and if we were to go there to live, would there not come to us *The Dinner That Is Always There?* Or I might find Great White Bear’s meat shelf! All the wise medicine doctors say that he has a meat shelf far, far north; that it is wide as the sky and high as the moon, and there is Oh! meat and meat

and seal-oil and all kinds of good things on it! But how would I ever climb up?" he sighed.

Then he thought and thought and thought. "I might find the *Lake of Many Large Fishes*, for every wise medicine man knows that there is somewhere in all this empty land a great lake where one may catch fish with a tomcod line—one, two, three, four, Oh! perhaps a dozen at a time, and they are big! BIG! not small and soft as the poor little tomcod are; and if I could find that, would not *The Dinner That Is Always There* come to my people? And it might go way, way up to the sky where, when the Northern Lights are glowing and swinging backward and forward, the medicine

men say the men of the sky are playing ball, and the swaying is when one side is gaining and the other losing. If I should go up there I might find many things to eat, for the people of the sky must have plenty, else they would not have time to play so much on long winter nights. And I might—I might—I—I," but the boy had fallen fast asleep.

All the long night through he slept soundly, but along toward morning he began to dream that his faithful Soolook was coming down through the cave barking loud as ever he could, followed by a terrible Dakponamuck, which was almost as wide as the cave itself and almost as tall, and which had a pair of the terrible tusks that

he had found in the cave. On, on! it came rushing wildly and bellowing madly. Now Menadlook could hear his hoarse breathing, and now he was swallowed up by the dust that the mad creature raised from the moldy floor. Now, now—he should be trampled to death in another moment—Now—now—but just then he awoke with a start and stared about the cave where a little light was creeping in from the entrance far away.

CHAPTER VI

THE STRANGE MAN AND HIS FOUR REINDEER

When Menadlook awoke he heard old Soolook barking at something way back in the cave. His heart stood still! It might be a great, gaunt white wolf or some sleepy old white bear! Anyway, whatever it might be, he must go to the assistance of his brave old friend, else he might lose him, and then there would be no one in the world to comfort him.

He hurriedly lighted his moss torch, and groping his way back to the end of the cave looked at his companion Soolook, and what do you suppose?

He was barking down a hole in the wall, which could have made room for nothing more dangerous than a little, long-nosed mouse! Just like a dog, wasn't it? Menadlook did not know whether to scold him or to laugh, so he did both, though the laugh was a very weak one, for he was very, very hungry.

After that he went and sat in the mouth of the cave with his faithful companion beside him. He was beginning to feel extremely homesick. Three days he had been away from his village, his old uncle, his aunt, and Attakak. This was the longest time he had ever been away from them, and I guess perhaps you can tell just how



Soolook Barked at Something Way Back in the Cave

he felt. I am certain you can, if you were ever away from your home for the very first time.

Well, he was sitting there blue as blue could be, and wondering if he was ever going to find *The Dinner That Is Always There*, when he caught sight of a strange thing. A very, very strange thing, indeed! He shaded his eyes. Then he stood up and pinched himself to see if he was asleep, but he wasn't. What do you think? There was a white reindeer coming around the very next hill, and it was driven by a strange looking man with a white face and a long white beard! The man was leading three reindeer behind, and they were trotting along behind without making the least particle of a fuss

about it! Menadlook had never seen a man like that before. He had never seen reindeer led or driven before! He had a great mind to run back in the cave and hide, but he didn't. He must be very brave. Perhaps this strange man could tell him where *The Dinner That Is Always There* was to be found. He marched bravely out to meet him.

The strange man seemed very glad to see him and, driving his reindeer to the mouth of the cave, tied them there while Menadlook tied Soolook to a little willow tree to keep him from playing too roughly with the timid reindeer.

The white man made a little fire and boiled water for a cup of tea, and gave Menadlook some food to eat which

was very good indeed, but was nothing like anything he had ever eaten before in his life.

“But,” said the stranger, when they had eaten, “why are you living here in this cave all by yourself?”

“I am in search of *The Dinner That Is Always There*,” answered Menadlook with a smile.

“The what?” said the stranger staring.

“*The Dinner That Is Always There*,” Menadlook repeated, still smiling. Then he told the stranger all about it.

“Why!” exclaimed the stranger, as he finished, “Perhaps you are the very fellow I am looking for!”

“My name is Menadlook!” replied the boy quickly, “Were you



He Gave Menadlook Some Food

sent by the Raven Father to help me find *The Dinner That Is Always There?*"

"Not by the Raven Father, but sent all the same," said the stranger. "You see those four reindeer out there, the white one and the two spotted ones and the brown one? Well, I am to give them to some one, and they are to provide *The Dinner That Is Always There* for all Eskimo people."

Menadlook looked and looked, and thought and thought, and thought, but he could not see how four small reindeer could provide dinners for all his village, all the year round, forever, as he had hoped to be able to do.

"Now," said the stranger, "you must believe many things that you

cannot see all at once. You do believe such things, or you would still be hunting seal and walrus among your people, as all the others have done, instead of being out here searching for *The Dinner That Is Always There*. You will take these four reindeer to your village after you have driven me to a place on the beach, Sitnezok, you call it, where there are two old houses in which no one lives now. You must leave me there. You must go to the village and there tell your people you have found how to get *The Dinner That Is Always There*. They won't believe you, but perhaps your own family will, and if they do, take them to the tundra with you, for you must live on the tundra,

far, far from other people's homes where there are no dogs, and you must guard the reindeer well from the wolves. And never, never must you sell or kill a mother reindeer.

"When you leave the village go back to the old house at Sitnezok, and there you will find strange boxes and pook-sacks full of food that will seem very strange to you at first, but by and by you will find it very good indeed. Teach the old woman to take what she can balance on her broad sewing needle from the shiny box and mix it with all she can put in a boot sole from the strange pook-sack. Then she must mix it with water, just enough so it will not stick to her fingers, and this she must roast on hot stones before the fire. It



From the Strange Pook-sack

will be very good, and always, every year, you will find plenty there at the old houses at Sitnezok. On the fourth year you must go to Sitnezmie, which white men call Cape Nome, and there you will find wonderful things, houses and houses not built with logs and sod, but just strips of logs, and windows not covered with eider duck-skins, but with ice that won't melt winter or summer. Many, many other strange things you will see, but you must not stay, as you may wish to do. You must leave one reindeer with a man there and you must return to your herd of reindeer.

“After that you shall see what you shall see; you shall see what you shall see. . . .” said the old man, nodding

his head very wisely, "But two things you must remember: First you must remember that great things come to men little by little, little by little, and not all at once, as you have dreamed; and remember never to sell or kill a mother reindeer, even if you should come to have hundreds and hundreds of them all your own."

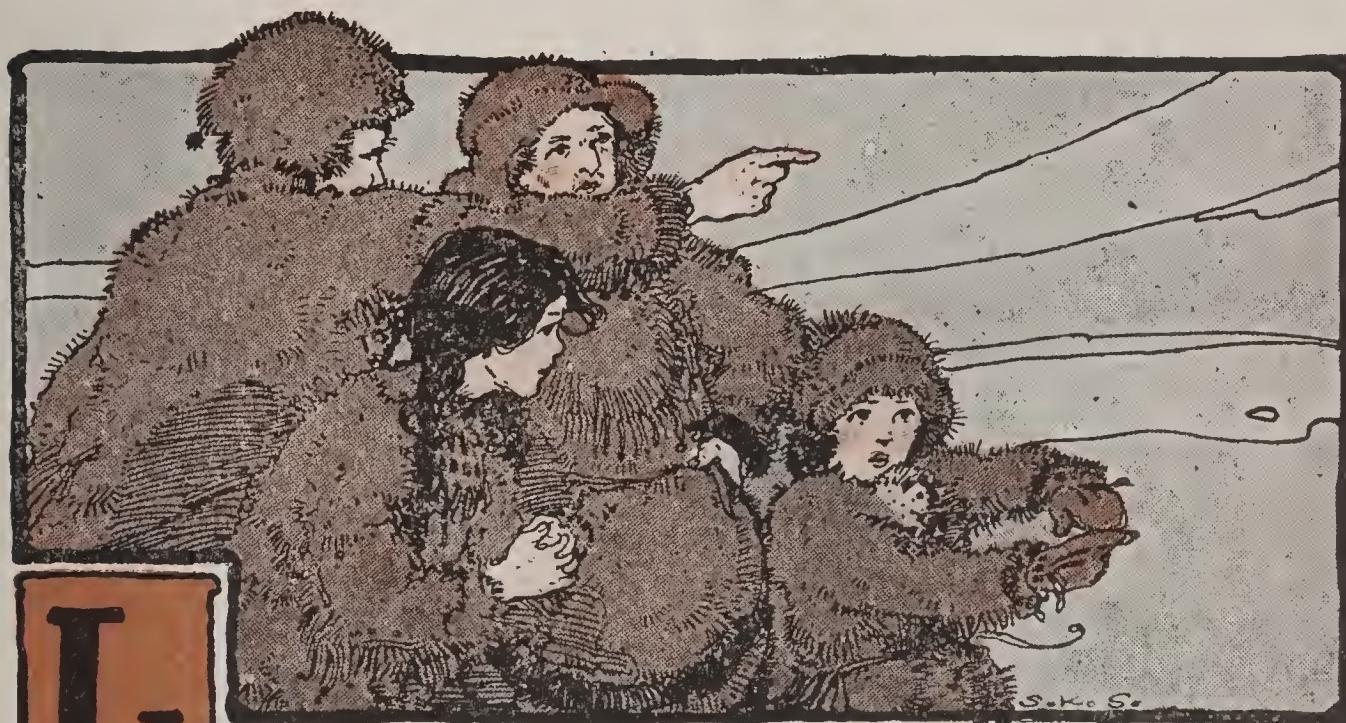
Menadlook could not see how he would ever come to have hundreds and hundreds of reindeer, but the old man seemed very wise and very kind, so tying his faithful Soolook to the reindeer sled, he took the old man to Sitznezok, and leaving him there, drove the reindeer to his own home.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT CHIEF AND THE BRAVE HUNTER LAUGH AT MENADLOOK

What a shout there was when Menadlook came within sight of his native village driving his one white reindeer and leading the three others behind.

“Uba-gook! Uba-gook! (Look! Look!) they all shouted in a chorus, “Menadlook is coming back driving one reindeer and leading three. He will tell us now where we may find *The Dinner That Is Always There!*” Of course, they all wished to ask questions at once, but it was right and proper that the chief and the greatest hunter should



S.K.S.

Look, look, they all shouted

ask questions first, for was not one a great chief and was not the other a very brave hunter? So they were allowed to ask questions first.

“Did you find it? Did you find *The Dinner That Is Always There?*” they asked both at once.

“Yes,” Menadlook bowed modestly, “I have found it.”

“Where? Where?” cried the greatest hunter.

“Where? Where? Where?” shouted all the people, in a chorus.

“Tell me,” whispered the chief in one of Menadlook’s ears. “Tell me, and I will give you all the rich fox skins and beaver skins and marten skins and mink skins I possess.”

“Tell me,” shouted the brave hunter, becoming very bold, “Tell me, and I will never go hunting again in my life.”

All the people had something to say about what they would do when they knew where the dinner was to be found, but as he listened to them Menadlook grew sadder and sadder, for he realized that what he had found was not at all

what they had expected, and they would not be satisfied at all, for they had expected that every one would have it at once, and none would have to work any more. But he said modestly, “These, my four reindeer will bring us *The Dinner That Is Always There.*”

Then all the people who had praised him began to shout at him and poke fun. “These four reindeer?” they cried, “Why they would not make a meal for us! How can they bring us dinners forever?”

“Leave him alone,” another shouted, “he has wandered so long that the moon has looked at him and he cannot think well anymore, let him go!”

“Well, anyway,” said the chief, “We will try your reindeer, for they look sleek and fat, and will make a fine roast.”

“No, no!” cried the boy in dismay, “You do not understand. I must not kill my reindeer, for then *The Dinner That Is Always There* will never come.”

“Not kill the reindeer? Not kill the reindeer?” They shouted in a chorus. “Why, what are reindeer for but to kill?” They would have rushed upon the reindeer and killed them at once, but just at that moment the white reindeer, as if understanding what was going on, gave a great leap for liberty and went spinning away, striking the bravest hunter across the knees with the sled, and sending his spear flying through the air. Menadlook clung to

the skin-rope fastened to the sled, and the rope tripped the chief and tossed him head foremost into a snow-bank, while all the people shouted and screamed loudly and long.

Menadlook clung to his rein like grim death, and at last sprang upon the sled. His reindeer were so swift that no one thought of following him, knowing very well that they could never catch him. He waited outside the village till after dark, feeling sure that his own family would join him. And just when he was about giving up hope, and was ready to drive away alone, here came Attakak, and the old man and the old woman, bringing their deer-skins, and their needles, and all things else that a thrifty Eskimo family must have.

CHAPTER VIII

MENADLOOK PROSPERS

Attakak, Menadlook's little playmate, had believed in him very much, so she had run right away for her deer-skins and needles, and the old woman believed in him a little, "For," she thought to herself, "he at least has four reindeer which we can kill and eat, and that will make many dinners, while here we have no dinners at all." Then, of course, there was nothing for the old man to do but follow, for he did not wish to live all by himself.

They drove long into the night, when finally they came to Sitnezok, where the deserted igloos were, and there, sure enough, in barrels and boxes was a great supply of strange food. The



Wonderful Birds from Afar

old woman mixed the white powder in the shiny tin can with the white powder in the cloth sack with water, just as she was told, and Ah-ne-ca! it was so good when they baked it on a stone by the fire that they came near killing themselves, over-eating the very first time.

They built themselves a cabin out on the wide, empty tundra, far away from wolves and dogs. They stored their strange food high on a new meat shelf,

and every day the old woman went there and climbing up said, "Sure enough here is dinner for us all," and never the whole winter through did she climb to the shelf and, rattling her stick on the meat shelf say, "'Ileet-pon-e-muk!' There were dinner here last week, but now there are no dinners at all!" So Menadlook was very glad, but sometimes he was a little sad, still, for he had so hoped to have *The Dinner That Was Always There* for all his people, and here were dinners for but four.

Now one might think that the great, empty tundra, with its wild whistling winds and its white, white snow everywhere, and not another home anywhere, would be a very lonesome place indeed. And perhaps Attakak did

think of that when she came to ride away on Menadlook's deer sled, but if she did, she forgot all about it very, very soon, for while there are no homes of people on the wide, wide tundra, there are the homes of many of Mother Nature's children, and the most interesting ones in the world. Here, far away from the cruel hunters, Little White Fox creeps out of his home under some great rock and goes peering about everywhere, and if Menadlook and Attakak happened to be gathering frozen heather berries on the hillside, he would not scamper away at once, but would stand and allow them to talk to him. Madam Ptarmigan, too, in her prettiest white winter dress, and very proud of her pink stockings, strolled about

quite close to them, picking seeds from the flower pods which waved and rattled in the wind. Sometimes a shy caribou would come to visit their tame reindeer, but would go bounding away at sight of them, and sometimes a great white wolf would come down from the North and threaten their little herd. Then there were nights of sleeplessness, when someone must watch very sharply, for not one of their precious herd must be lost, else *The Dinner That Was Always There* might never come.

But there were sports for the little boy and girl also, for was there not the wonderful sled deer? Oh! the times they had spinning away over the tundra after this steed, who was far swifter

than any dog-team! Miles and miles they traveled together, back to back, skimming along. It was just like coasting, only there was no climb back up hill. Miles and miles they went, after wood from the beach and water from the river.

And when Spring came, Oh! the beauty of it all then! The wild flowers, red, pink, blue and yellow! The wild ducks and geese, the swans and cranes, the loons, and the little butter-balls that came to make their nests about the little lakes, and sing their strange love songs of nesting-time! And Oh! the things they learned about these wonderful birds that come from far, far away, and went back at the first falling of snow in the autumn. Oh!

No, it was not one bit lonesome on the tundra in winter and summer. And best of all, they had one another for playmates, and there was a dinner always waiting for them when they returned from work or from play. As for the old man and the old woman, they were quite content to sit by the fire or go about their work, quite happy in the joy of their little folk, and in the great supply of *Dinners That Were Always There.*

Then, too, when Spring came, there were three baby reindeer on the tundra with the mother reindeer. Then, you may be sure, Menadlook was glad he had not consented to kill the reindeer mothers, and Attakak was more glad than he, for the baby reindeer in their

velvet coats were very beautiful indeed. One was all white like the father reindeer, and one was white with brown spots, and one was brown with white spots. You may be certain they were guarded very carefully day and night, and if a stream was to be crossed, Menadlook or the old man was right there to see that they were not drowned. Very fast the white baby reindeer grew tall and strong, and had large antlers like his father, while the other two were more slender and had antlers like their mothers.

Next year there were three other baby reindeer, and in the following year the same. In the autumn of the fourth year, when the first white baby reindeer was large as his father, Me-

nadlook took him to Nome as he had promised, and gave him to the white man who lived in the little green house on the edge of the sand-pit. This was in part pay for the white man's food, which you probably have guessed was just flour and baking-powder, and I presume there was also some sugar and tea now and then. By and by Menadlook would be able to take enough young reindeer to the white man in the little green house on the edge of the sand-pit to pay for all the food he had eaten all the years, for each year at a certain time there was always a fresh supply of flour and baking-powder, sugar and tea right at that same place on the beach by the old deserted igloos at Sitnezok

CHAPTER IX

THE DINNER THAT IS ALWAYS THERE AT LAST

One day, when the old man and the old woman and Menadlook and Attakak had lived on the tundra six years; when they had taken six reindeer to Nome and had thirty all their own, besides five wild caribou which they had caught when young and had tamed, there appeared once more the old man with the white face and the long beard. His face was whiter than ever and his beard longer, but he seemed very pleasant, and when Menadlook had told him all he had done, and had showed him his thirty reindeer and his five young caribou, he

rubbed his hands together with glee, and exclaimed:

“Good! Good! Who would have dreamed you could have done so well!”

After that they had a very good meal of white man’s food, which Attakak cooked all by herself, for she was quite a young lady by this time. After he had eaten, the old man rubbed his hands together more than ever and praised Attakak’s cooking.

“Now,” he said, “because you have been so careful and have believed in me, I am going to give you a great many reindeer to keep for your people. I am going to give you a hundred!”

“Ca?” (Is it possible?) exclaimed Menadlook, opening and closing his



"Is It Possible?" Exclaimed Menadlook

hands ten times to show the old man and old woman how many.

"Yes," the white man said, "and this summer there will be a great deal of white man's food on the beach, and you must bring ten young men and their families here to help you care for the reindeer, and give them some of the food to eat. Each year after that you must take more and more young men, and send more and more rein-

deer to Nome, but never, never must you kill a mother reindeer, nor bring one to Nome for the white man. And if you do as I tell you, the time will come when *The Dinner That Is Always There* will be here for all your people, just as it has for you."

At that he slapped his reindeer with the reins and rode away, while the four Eskimo people stared at him in wonder.

The hundred reindeer were brought, and that made a hundred and thirty-five, counting the wild young caribou. Then Menadlook sent to Sitnezok for the ten best young men of the village and their families, and they came very much ashamed to think they had laughed at Menadlook when he had

but four reindeer and was going to bring *The Dinner That Was Always There*. They went to work with a will, and built cabins on the tundra where they could live in the winter time, though they lived in tents in the summer. They found the food on the beach, all they would need for the long winter.

The white man never returned, and indeed it was not really necessary, for every year there were more and more reindeer till there was a large herd of them feeding in every little corner of the tundra.

Well, one night, after years had passed, all the herders had driven their reindeer close to the village, and all the old men who hunted seals and

great white bears had come in from the ocean, and they were getting ready for a grand feast. While the women were all very busy preparing the dinner, the old men were sitting about the seal-oil lamps talking of *The Dinner That Is Always There*, just as they had done when Menadlook was a very small fellow. Some said it was to be found far, far North; some that it was over by the Smoking Mountain; some that it was found to be on the many islands far to the South, and some contended that it was nowhere but in the moon.

Suddenly, in the midst of the discussion, a young herder stood up and exclaimed:

“*The Dinner That Is Always There is here!*”

“Where? Where?” shouted all the old men in chorus.

“Where? Where?” screamed all the women and children in a breath.

“Listen!” said the young herder, very thoughtfully. “When did any of your women, young or old, go last to her meat shelf, and rattling her stick, say, ‘Well, there were plenty of dinners here last week, but now there are no dinners at all?’”

For a long time everyone was silent. They were thinking—thinking hard. But think as they might, no one could quite remember, it had been so long ago. Then with one voice they shouted:

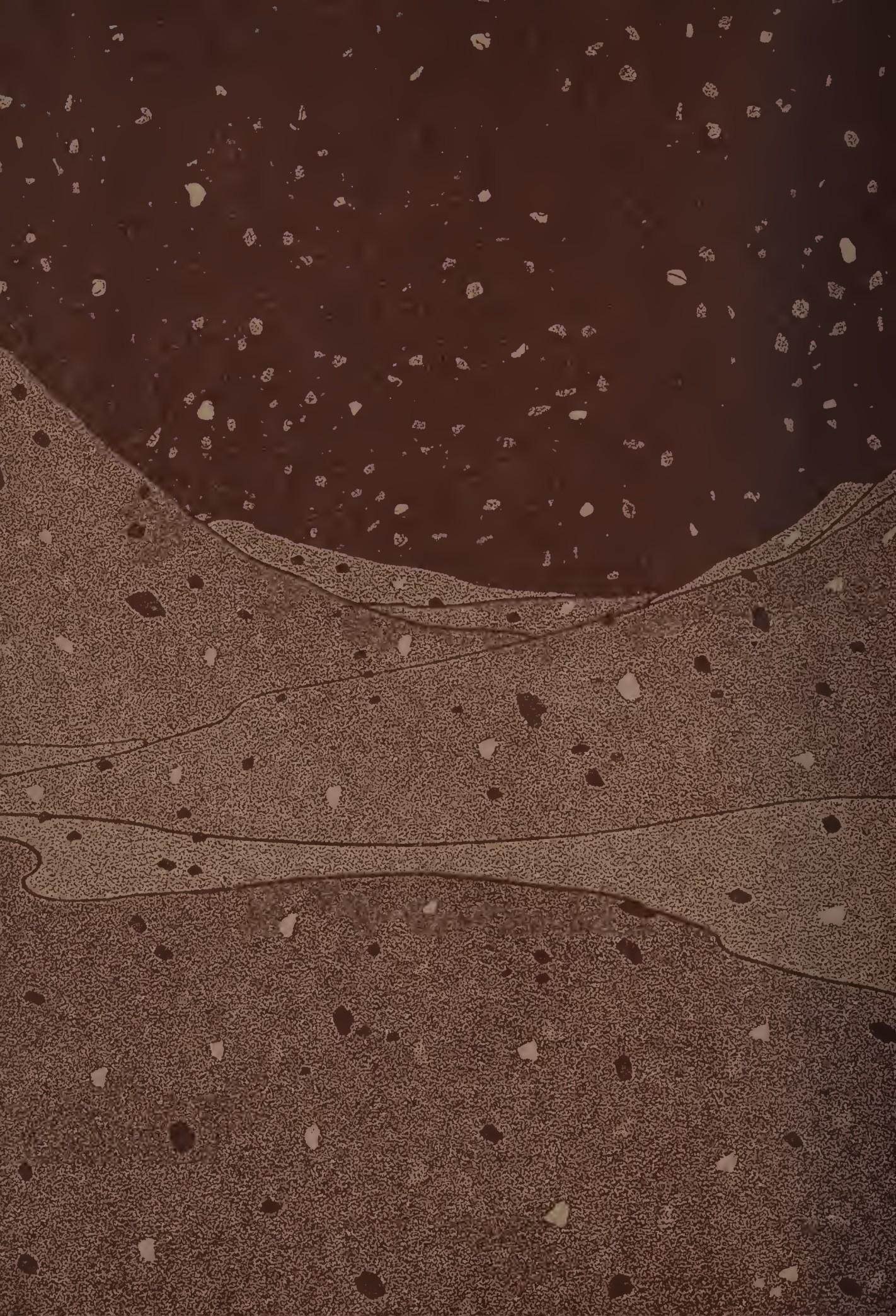
“The dinner is here! The dinner is here!”

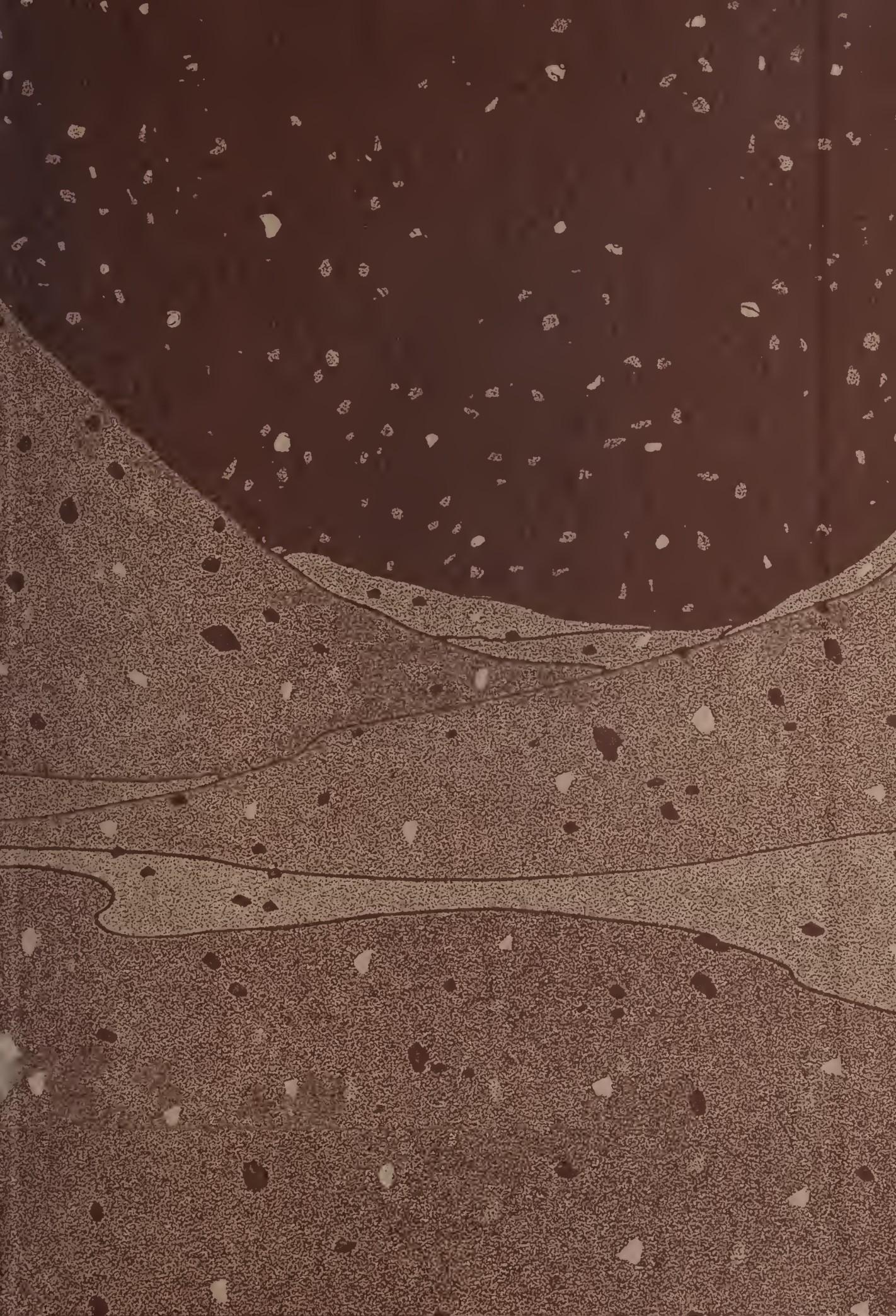
You see it had come to them so slowly, “little by little,” as the white man had said it would, that they had not realized that at last they really had *The Dinner That Is Always There*.

Of course, they all knew then how much they owed to the boy who had grown up in their own village. “For,” they said, “if Menadlook had not gone in search of *The Dinner That Is Always There*, and if he had not had much more faith than we in the reindeer, the dinner might never have come to us at all.” All together they began to shout, “Menadlook! Menadlook! Menadlook! Menadlook!” They shouted so loud and so long that I am sure all the reindeer

awakened and lifted their heads from the mossy pillows to listen, and I am not certain but Little White Fox paused in his scampering on the tundra, and Great White Bear from his shambling on large ice-floe to listen, too.

After that Menadlook made a speech, which was a very, very short one, as all speeches should be when little folk are waiting for their dinner, especially when there are doughnuts fried in seal-oil, salmon-berry pie, baked white bear hearts, and any number of good things to eat. After the feast everyone went his own way very happy, but Menadlook happiest of all, for now he knew that *The Dinner That Is Always There* was always here for all his people. (*Finis*)





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